

This Week in Congress

February 1, 2010

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." On Friday, Kansans celebrated our state's 149th birthday, Kansas Day. This holiday reminds me how fortunate we are to live in such a great state. I am proud to be a Kansan and honored to serve Kansans in our nation's capital. In Topeka, my wife, Robba, and I attended the 92nd Annual Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas Banquet. This group was formed to preserve our state's history and traditions and to honor outstanding citizens of Kansas. Congratulations to Defense Secretary Robert Gates, a Wichita native, who was named Kansan of the Year.

President Obama Addresses Nation at State of the Union

On Wednesday, President Obama delivered his State of the Union address. The President focused heavily on his suggestions to improve the economy and cut government spending—both subjects that have not received enough attention.

In tackling the deficit, the President called for a partial three-year spending freeze of some discretionary spending programs. Although it is estimated the freeze would save \$20 billion, this represents only a fraction of total government spending. The targeted programs make up only 11 percent of the budget and the freeze does not cover spending on Social Security, Medicare, the military and other programs. What is more, the three-year freeze would not go into effect until 2011. Even this small step has been met with opposition from congressional Democrats.

More must be done to stop the government's addiction to spending. Congress has racked up a \$1.3 trillion deficit this year. Our nation's debt is becoming an increasingly large proportion of our yearly economic output, and is expected to reach \$15 trillion or 67 percent of GDP by 2020, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office.

The President cannot have it both ways. On one hand, he is asking Congress to reduce spending. At the same time, he is also asking Congress to approve health care legislation and a cap and trade bill—both of which will cost billions of dollars and will put Americans out of work. If the President is serious about job growth and fiscal restraint, he should consider common sense proposals that would save taxpayer money and protect American jobs.

Taiwan Market Important to Kansas Beef Industry

Following efforts by Taiwan's parliament to block imports of U.S. ground beef and beef offal, I sent a letter Thursday to parliament President Wang Jin-pyng expressing my disappointment with this decision. In addition to reversing a recent agreement, the parliament has approved a non-binding resolution that calls for U.S. beef imports to be restricted to products that come from cattle 30 months of age and younger.

These actions threaten the beef industry in Kansas, which accounts for more than \$6 billion in annual revenue. In my letter, I requested that the Taiwanese government not act on the non-binding resolution and abide by its trade agreements with the U.S. Our beef is the safest, highest quality beef in the world. Taiwan's decision is purely political and not based on sound science. Taiwan must live up to its international trade obligations. [Click here](#) to read more.

Health Care Costs Must Be Controlled

I wrote to the editors of Kansas newspapers this week to explain my concern with the failure of current health care reform legislation to address ever-increasing health care costs. One reason I oppose the current proposals is the overwhelming evidence of the bills' failure to reduce costs. In order to achieve true health care reform, health care costs must be reduced. If costs are not

controlled, then reform efforts, whatever they may be, will fail to make quality health care more affordable and accessible for Kansans. [Click here](#) to read my letter.

Accepting Wheat Advocate Award

Kansas wheat producers contribute to the economic strength and vitality of communities across our state. This week, I met with members of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers to discuss legislative issues important to wheat producers in Kansas. Among the issues we talked about was the impact cap and trade would have on farmers. This legislation would raise energy and production costs—making it that much harder for farmers to stay in business.

During our meeting, Kansas Association of Wheat Growers members Jerry McReynolds of Woodston and Paul Penner of Hillsboro presented me with the 2009 Wheat Advocate Award. Nine Members of Congress received the award this year from the National Association of Wheat Growers for their exceptional support of the wheat industry. I am honored to receive this award and will continue to promote policies that give Kansas wheat producers an opportunity to succeed. Thanks to Diane McReynolds of Woodston, David Schemm of Sharon Springs, Ron and Shirley Suppes of Dighton, Jay Armstrong of Muscotah and Justin Gilpin of Manhattan for visiting with me. [Click here](#) to read more about the award. [Click here](#) to view photos from this meeting.

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Touring the Johnson Center for Basic Cancer Research in Manhattan

On Monday, I toured the Johnson Center for Basic Cancer Research at Kansas State University in Manhattan to learn more about the Center's efforts to support education, training and public outreach about cancer. While I was at the facility, I had the opportunity to meet with several students and Dr. Alexander Beeser, who studies pediatric cancer. As a member of the Pediatric Cancer Caucus, finding a treatment and cure for childhood cancer is of special importance to me. With 15,000 new cases diagnosed each year, cancer is the leading cause of death by disease in children. Thanks to Director Rob Dennell for showing me the Center's research initiatives. [Click here](#) to view a photo from my visit.



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Helping Kansas Families Adopt

Since being contacted by a Kansas family seeking to adopt a child from the Kyrgyz Republic, a former Soviet republic in central Asia, I have worked to speed up adoptions from this country. This week, I encouraged the Kyrgyz government to complete the adoptions of 65 Kyrgyz children who have American families, including two families in Kansas, committed to caring for them. The adoptions of these children have been stalled for over a year and I believe it is important to unite these children with the loving families waiting for them in the U.S. as soon as possible. My office is frequently able to help families adopting children from other countries. Please [contact me](#) if I can be of assistance.

Meeting with Federal Reserve Bank Director in Kansas City

On Friday, I met with Tenth District Federal Reserve Bank President Thomas Hoenig in Kansas City. As one of 12 regional banks in the Federal Reserve System, the Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank serves parts of Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming. At a meeting Wednesday, President Hoenig was the only vote of dissent to the Federal Reserve Bank's policy to keep interest rates exceptionally low for an extended period of time. During our meeting we discussed the economic consequences of federal policies, such as cap and trade legislation, the importance of reducing the deficit and keeping taxes low. President Hoenig also shared some of the lessons he has learned from our nation's economic situation. Thank you to President Hoenig for meeting with me and Diane Raley for arranging my visit.

Kansas Community Colleges Prepare Students for Success

On Thursday, I joined Dr. Thomas Burke, the President of Kansas City Kansas Community College (KCKCC), for a visit to the campus. KCKCC is one of 19 Kansas community colleges and has been serving Kansans since 1923. Dr. Burke; Dr. Sue Courtney, Dean of Business and Continuing Education; Dr. Tamara Agha-Jaffar, Acting Associate Provost of Academic Affairs and Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts; Brian Bode, Dean of Finance and Administration; and Dr. Hasan Naima, Dean of Technical Education Center and I discussed the importance of a college education and proposals to make college more affordable. The Kansas community college system plays an important role in preparing Kansans for a lifetime of success. As a member of the Community College Caucus, I appreciated learning about the initiatives at KCKCC. Thanks to Dr. Burke for his hospitality.

Learning about Innovative Cancer Treatment at Menorah Medical Center

I visited Menorah Medical Center (MMC) in Overland Park on Thursday to learn about the innovative technology being used at the hospital and how that technology can be used by other Kansas hospitals. Of particular interest was CyberKnife, a revolutionary new treatment for destroying harmful tumors that does not require surgery or anesthesia and allows patients go home immediately after treatment with few, if any, side effects. MMC was the first hospital in the area with this technology. I also learned about new ways to treat breast cancer.

During my visit, I also hosted a roundtable discussion with hospital staff to hear their thoughts about health care reform legislation and learn more about their commitment to providing top-notch cancer care for Kansans. Thank you to MMC staff for teaching me about these new treatment options, including President and CEO Steven Wilkinson, Debbie Gafford, Jennifer

Eslinger, Kathy Sankovich, David Carnes, Theresa Kortemeyer, Nikki Johnson, Donna Jungman, Dr. Mike Hughes, Andrea Pointer and Marc Edwards.

Meeting with Kansas Contractors

I attended the Kansas Contractors Annual Convention on Thursday in Kansas City to meet with contractors from across the state. Construction firms provide many jobs to Kansans and the industry contributes to the economic strength of our state. While there, I spoke to many members about the effects the recession and tight state budget are having on the construction industry. As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I also updated the group on the committee's work on the highway reauthorization bill. Thanks to Bob Totten for his hospitality.

Attending University of Kansas Basketball Game

On Monday, I was in Lawrence to attend the University of Kansas men's basketball game against the University of Missouri. Basketball is an important pastime in our state and the Jayhawks' rivalry with Missouri remains as entertaining as ever. I enjoyed watching the Jayhawks play a great game in front of another enthusiastic, sellout crowd. Special thanks to Chancellor Bernadette Grey-Little for her hospitality.

Honoring the Life of Vern Chesbro

I attended the memorial service of Vern Chesbro of Ottawa on Wednesday and spoke at the service of Vern's commitment to his family and his tireless work to make certain his hometown was a safe, productive place to raise a family and run a business. Vern was an active member of the Ottawa community and the Kansas Republican Party. As a past chairman of the Kansas Republican Party, Vern met six U.S. Presidents and was an effective ambassador for our state. With the passing of Vern, Kansas lost a champion for bipartisan cooperation. I am honored to have had the opportunity to pay tribute to Vern and to call him a friend. Thanks to all those who gathered to celebrate this great Kansan's life. Robba and I have Vern's widow, Phyllis, and the rest of the Chesbro family in our thoughts and prayers.

In the Office

Jodi Schmidt of Hays was in with Hays Medical Center to discuss recent developments with the hospital and Kansas rural health priorities. Brenda Bandy of Manhattan and Martha Hagen of Topeka were in with the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition to support breastfeeding mothers in the workplace.

Cayenne Ast, Barbara Clark, Shelby Reiber and Chris Hahn of Emporia were in with Kansas Special Olympics and Best Buddies to discuss support for sports, social and recreational programs. Pamela Black of Wichita was in with the LIVESTRONG Army of South Central Kansas to express her support for cervical cancer screening programs. City Manager Larry Uri and Mayor Greg Hattan of Concordia were in to update me on city projects, including the Concordia Dam.

Trudy Racine and Paula Wischnod of Topeka, Bill Reynolds of Wichita, Barb Kempf of Kansas City, Steve Solomon of Lawrence and Tracie Lansing of Lansing were in with the Kansas Children's Alliance to discuss efforts to protect and strengthen the welfare of children and families in our state. Holly and Megan Gilpin of Wichita were in with NephCure Foundation to support research for Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis and other kidney diseases. Dan Hartman of Dighton was in with Lane County Economic Development to discuss a regional electrical transmission project.

Rita Gedney, Victoria Harris and Nicole Boatwright of Salina; Mary Baskett of Lawrence; Melissa Widger of Dodge City; Glenda Wilcox of Wichita; and Jim McDaniel of Saint Marys were in with the Kansas Head Start Association to share their support for efforts to help families become self-reliant and informed advocates for their children's education.

Judi O'Grady of Eudora was in with CureSearch to talk about support for childhood cancer research. Michael and Carla Kennedy of Lenexa, Anthony Strickland of Washington and Jessica Leiker of Great Bend were in with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Bureau of Local and Rural Health to visit about medical education in Kansas and rural health initiatives.

Ron and Ginger Tittel came by my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol.

Very truly yours,

Jerry